

Pilots

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land signed defender Lauren Orlando, who scored the game-winning goal for the U.S. Under-21 national team to win the Nordic Cup. Also added was forward Erin Misaki, who was the California Southern Section offensive player of the year her senior season of high school.

Internationally, the Pilots had success as well, signing two players with World Cup experience. Susanna Heikari is the starting forward for Finland's national team, and Lisa Casagrande has started for Australia in both the 1995 and 1999 World Cups.

With six 1998 NCAA Tournament participants on the Pilots schedule, Portland still chose to travel down Interstate Highway 5 to take on the Ducks, who have never appeared in the tournament.

Oregon played one of its best games last season at Portland, holding the Pilots scoreless until six minutes left in the game in a 1-0 loss.

Could that have been the beginning of a budding rivalry? According to Charles, Oregon's program has the foundation for future success.

"Oregon has the ability [in the future] to be just as successful as we are," Charles said. "They have a good school, a quality program and facility and the Northwest is a great place to live in my opinion."

Steffen, who said Oregon is "a couple players away" from Portland's level, insisted this Ducks team has a different mentality than seasons past.

"Last year, we were happy to tie Portland for most of the game before losing," Steffen said. "We won't accept playing tough and losing — we want to play tough and win."

Tennis

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wins in the Pac-10."

On the women's side, Griffin is looking to build on last season's upset of South Florida in the NCAA tournament. The Ducks who finished No. 48, look to finish in the top 30 this season.

Despite graduating the bottom half of his lineup, Griffin feels that the players he has coming in are just as good, if not better, than the ones who departed.

"Amy Juppenlatz has been ranked in the top-65 kids in the country," Griffin said.

Monica Gieczys from Poland

also comes in as a highly regarded player. She was one of the top two juniors in Poland last year, a similar ranking to the Ducks' No. 1 player, Alina Wygonowska, when she came to Oregon.

Griffin hopes that the influx of talent and the experience of the returning players will be a good mix.

One of the team's key members, Sarah Colistro, who played No. 3 last season before going down with a knee injury, has just started playing again.

"With the seven players we have, and if Sarah is healthy, it looks like the best team we've had since I've been here," Griffin said. "And if we get a solid player in January, it could be a top-25 year for us."

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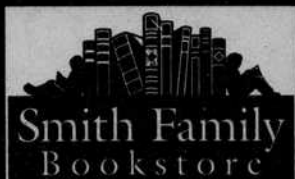
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